

OXFORD CITY 3 WYCOMBE WANDERERS 2

WYCOMBE WANDERERS failed in a desperate bid to force a replay in the Amateur Cup first round at Oxford on Saturday. In a thrilling finish, they scored one goal, had one shot hooked off the line and another turned over the bar.

Ian Rundle sparked off Wycombe's late revival with an 86th-minute goal and Oxford, under heavy pressure to the end, were lucky to survive. Only a superb last-minute save by John Shippey from Vic Faulkner prevented an equaliser.

But Wycombe could have few complaints about their defeat. Although Oxford eased up after taking a 3-1 lead, the visitors failed to take advantage until the closing stages and by then they had left it much too late.

After an early setback, Wycombe fought back well for Tony Horseman to equalise but then they hit a bad patch when Oxford broke through for two goals in a crucial five-minute spell just before half-time.

Despite Oxford's second half fade-out, the forwards showed no great improvement and in the end it took centre-half Rundle to show them the way to goal and prevent a total Wycombe eclipse.

Wycombe had two good periods — midway through the first half and towards the end — when Barry Baker was a constant menace to the Oxford defence but otherwise they did not impress on a hard, frosty ground.

Oxford adapted themselves much better to the difficult conditions and generally had the edge, but Wycombe's perseverance almost paid dividends late in the game when Faulkner was out of luck with three worthy attempts.

Oxford were quickly in their stride at the start and Rundle turned the ball back to Maskell to relieve pressure when Oram and Pentecost threatened. Then Lailey cut out a swift cross from Pentecost after Woodley had slipped the ball through on the left.

Shippey collected a low centre from Merrick and put Oxford back on the offensive. Maskell punched out a free kick from Woodley and home pressure eventually paid off when a defensive slip gave them a goal after 12 minutes.

MATCH DETAILS

Oxford City: J. Shippey; M. Ramsden, G. Pullin; T. Jeakings, J. Shufflebotham, E. Metcalfe; A. Hellyer, A. Pentecost, K. Oram, T. Bradbury, J. Woodley. Sub. S. Morton.

Wycombe Wanderers: J. Maskell; L. Temel, C. Gale; J. Lailey, I. Rundle, D. Thomas; L. Worley, B. Baker, V. Faulkner, A. Horseman, L. Merrick. Sub. K. Samuels.

Referee: F. E. Bassett (Swindon).

Half-time: 3-1.

Goalscorers: Oxford — Woodley (2), Oram.

Wycombe—Rundle, Horseman.

Following a smart right-wing raid, Rundle trapped Oram's shot and pushed it back to Maskell. But Woodley was quick to see the opening, intercepted the ball and left the goalkeeper stranded with a firm shot.

Oram, unmarked in front of goal, just failed to reach a cross from Hellyer but Wycombe came back and Ramsden headed out a fierce drive from Horseman. Then Metcalfe took the ball off Baker's head when Thomas swung the ball across from the left.

Maskell dived full length to a cracking drive from Woodley and then Rundle cleared off the line after Bradbury had swept past the advancing goalkeeper. Maskell went off briefly with slight concussion and was replaced by Merrick but he returned four minutes later.

Maskell's reappearance put new heart into Wycombe and in the 34th minute they drew level. Thomas brought the ball through from midfield, brushed through Oxford's hesitant defence and slipped it across to Horseman who squeezed his shot between Shippey and the post.

But Oxford began to exert more pressure and after Metcalfe had shot straight at Maskell, the home side burst through for two goals in five minutes which had Wycombe struggling.

In the 39th minute, Ramsden floated over a free kick for Oram to head past Maskell and then Oram took another free kick from Ramsden and pushed it on to Woodley, who crashed the ball home from 25 yards giving the goalkeeper no chance.

Wycombe fought on in the second half and Horseman, unhindered in the goalmouth, was unlucky to see his shot blocked by Oxford's retreating defence. From the rebound, Faulkner gained possession but had similar misfortune.

At the other end, Oram broke swiftly in from the right and had his shot diverted behind.

Wycombe were in trouble again when Hellyer sprinted on to a through pass, outstripped Gale and cut in from the right. But he slipped at the vital moment and gave Maskell time to cover.

Wycombe kept pegging away and Shippey gathered a low shot from Lailey at the foot of the post. Then Faulkner put in a magnificent drive which the home goalkeeper did well to pull down.

With four minutes left, Faulkner beat Shippey with a close-range drive and Ramsden hooked the ball out for a corner. Fifteen players crowded into the Oxford goalmouth and as Worley's kick came across, Rundle somehow found a gap in the congested area to put Wycombe back in the game.

In an exciting finish, Wycombe piled on the pressure but their last chance vanished when Shippey leapt and turned Faulkner's great effort over the bar.